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Planning Commission Study Session

TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

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MEETING DATE: AUGUST 1, 2018

SUBJECT: Z18-24, LDC TEXT AMEND ELECTRONIC CHANGING MESSAGE DISPLAYS AND MARQUEE SIGNS: CITIZEN REVIEW AND INITIATION OF AMENDMENT TO THE TOWN OF GILBERT LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE, CHAPTER I ZONING REGULATIONS, DIVISION 4 GENERAL REGULATIONS, ARTICLE 4.4 SIGN REGULATIONS, AND THE GLOSSARY OF GENERAL TERMS AND THE APPENDIX 1 GRAPHICS, RELATED TO MANUAL AND ELECTRONIC CHANGING MESSAGE DISPLAYS UTILIZED WITH PERMANENT WALL AND MARQUEE SIGNS.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: Economic Development

The proposed amendment responds to business interest for more innovative sign types using electronic changing message displays.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

- A. Staff requests that the Planning Commission initiate a text amendment to the Land Development Code of Gilbert, Arizona, Chapter I Zoning Regulations, Division 4 General Regulations, Article 4.4 Sign Regulations, and the Glossary of General Terms and the Appendix 1 Graphics, related to Manual and

Electronic Changing Message Displays utilized with Permanent Wall and Marquee Signs.

- B. Conduct Citizen Review meeting to discuss the proposed LDC text amendments.

Overview

Businesses have recently expressed interest for more innovative sign types using electronic changing message, especially in vibrant village centers like the Heritage and Gateway Districts. These sign ideas and designs include adding scrolling text and full motion animation and video to marquee signs, and placing wall signs near business entrances that use changing message displays. Other ideas show wall signs on parking structures that electronically adjust message content as valet and general parking resources change. Staff has also heard feedback for more sign illumination options that include using exposed bulbs in creative ways.

The primary goal for this effort is to adopt modifications to the LDC that support and encourage economic development, attract investment, and are receptive to ever changing technology. Any proposed LDC changes should also contribute to community values for enduring architecture and design, which includes architecturally compatible signs that positively contribute to Gilbert's unique character, aesthetic environment and quality.

In response to the Town Council request for a future agenda item, the proposed text amendment will consider sign code changes that allow electronic changing message displays on building wall signs and marquee signs in specific districts. Discussion will include criteria and standards related to the display, timing, transition, illumination, operation, maintenance, placement, and size calculation of such signs. Based on the Planning Commission discussion and public input, changes may be recommended to the Land Development Code (LDC) Article 4.4 Sign Regulations, the Glossary of Terms and Appendix 1: Graphics for clarity and consistency.

Effect of Amendment

The effect of the amendment will be to allow Electronic Changing Message Displays on Permanent Wall and Marquee Signs for certain uses, to add criteria and standards related to the operation, placement and size of such signs, and to amend terms and graphics.

Process

Next steps include continued research and drafting of the new language for the relevant LDC sections. Attachment 1 contains an excerpt of the LDC; however, staff will continue to evaluate all sections of Article 4.4. A draft of the proposed changes will be provided in the coming months for Planning Commission consideration and recommendation to Town Council.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- A. Staff requests that the Planning Commission initiate a text amendment to the Land Development Code of Gilbert, Arizona, Chapter I Zoning Regulations, Division 4 General Regulations, Article 4.4 Sign Regulations, and the Glossary of General Terms and the Appendix 1 Graphics, related to Manual and Electronic Changing Message Displays utilized with Permanent Wall and Marquee Signs.

B. Conduct Citizen Review meeting to discuss the proposed LDC text amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Temes
Interim Principal Planner

Attachments and Enclosures:

- 1) Excerpt of LDC Text Pertaining to Electronic Changing Message Displays and Marquee Signs

Excerpt of LDC Text Pertaining to Electronic Changing Message Displays and Marquee Signs*

* please note - staff will be evaluating all relevant sections of Article 4.4 beyond those shown below.

Article 4.4 Sign Regulations

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4.409 Permanent Signs

A. *General Criteria for Lighting and Changing Message Displays Utilized with Permanent Signs.* The following general criteria and limitations for lighting and changing message displays shall apply to Permanent Signs, where indicated.

1. *Lighting.* The illumination of signs shall meet all regulations as set forth in the Gilbert Municipal Code, Chapter 42, Article II, Section 42-34.
 - a. Except for Changing Message Displays and Marquee Signs, any flashing, blinking, reflective, animated, or rotating lights, or signs with an intermittent or varying intensity of artificial illumination, whether deliberate or as a consequence of a defect in the sign or the illumination source, shall be prohibited for any and all signs.
 - b. Exposed incandescent, light-emitting diode (LED), fluorescent, metal halide, high- or low- sodium bulbs, or mercury vapor light sources shall not be used as a source of illumination except for Marquee Signs. All light sources shall be shielded to prevent illumination trespass onto properties other than where the light source is located.
 - c. Exposed neon tube type illumination may only be used for commercial uses in Commercial and the Heritage Village Center Zoning Districts, subject to administrative approval of a Comprehensive Sign Program, Master Sign Plan or Heritage Sign Plan, which must be based upon content-neutral objective criteria and as set forth in Section 5.602B.1 Administrative Design Review. Exposed neon tubing shall be appropriately sized. Exposed neon tube type illumination is prohibited in all other zoning districts.
 - d. Sign Illumination.

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- (2) Permanent Sign on a parcel in nonresidential use: A Permanent Sign on a parcel in a nonresidential use may be illuminated by internal

illumination, internal indirect (halo) illumination, or lit by external indirect illumination, unless otherwise specified in this Article; however, a Permanent Sign may not be illuminated in a manner that leaves the illumination device exposed to public view except with the use of neon tubing as provided in this Article.

- (3) Internal illumination: Any outdoor internally illuminated sign permitted under Article 4.4 shall be constructed with an opaque background and translucent letters or other graphical elements, or with a colored background and lighter letters or graphics.
 - (4) External indirect illumination: Externally lit signs are permitted to be illuminated only with steady, stationary, directed, and shielded light sources directed solely onto the sign. Light bulbs or tubes (excluding neon) used for illuminating a sign shall not be visible from the adjacent public rights-of-way and residential properties.
 - (5) Illumination of signs adjacent to single-family residential uses: No sign located within fifty (50) feet of a single-family zoning district shall be internally illuminated.
2. *Manual Changing Message Displays.* One-half (1/2) of the area of the face of a Freestanding Monument or Marquee Sign may be a manual Changing Message Display, subject to the criteria and limitations of this Article.
3. *Electronic Changing Message Displays.* The entire Sign Face of a Freestanding Monument, Tower Sign, and Freeway Sign may be an electronic Changing Message Display if said sign is located within a zoning district where Freestanding Signs are allowed except for residential zoning districts and subject to the following operational limitations. For non-residential uses in residential zoning districts, one-half (1/2) of the Sign Face of a Freestanding Monument Sign may be an electronic Changing Message Display, subject to the following operation limitations:
 - a. Display: An electronic Changing Message Display may be in full color.
 - b. Minimum Display Time: An electronic Changing Message Display shall not change more than once every eight (8) seconds.
 - c. Transition Method: An electronic Changing Message Display shall change by an instant change method.
 - d. Illumination Levels: An electronic Changing Message Display shall incorporate photocell/ light sensors, with automatic dimming technology that appropriately adjusts to ambient light conditions. Displays shall have a brightness level of no greater than 0.3 foot candles above ambient light conditions as measured by foot candle meter.

- e. Maintenance: Any allowed electronic Changing Message Display that malfunctions, fails, or ceases to operate in its usual or normal programmed manner shall be repaired or disconnected within forty-eight (48) hours by the owner or operator of such sign.
- f. Static messages: When visible from public streets or public rights-of-way, an electronic Changing Message Display shall be by way of static messages.

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4.409 Permanent Signs

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- B. ***Type of Permanent Signs.*** The following types of permanent signs are allowed in one or more of the Town of Gilbert's zoning districts, as more specifically set forth in 4.409.B.1. through B.25. below.

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- 23. ***Marquee Signs.*** In Commercial Zoning Districts and the Heritage Village Center District, a Marquee Sign may be located on a marquee that is approved by the Planning Commission or the Redevelopment Commission as applicable as part of a Design Review application, a Comprehensive Sign Program, Master Sign Plan or Heritage Sign Plan. A Marquee Sign shall only be affixed on a marquee located at the primary entrance of the tenant/user suite to which it is appurtenant. The Sign Area of the Marquee Sign, together with the Sign Area of any other allowed lawful and permitted signs for the same building, shall not exceed the limitation for the Sign Allowance Area set forth in Section 4.409.B. The colors, materials, and design of a Marquee Sign shall complement the design of the building(s) which it serves. A Marquee Sign may be internally or indirectly illuminated. Marquee Signs shall not be visible from adjacent residential properties. A Marquee Sign may include a manual Changing Message Display and sign copy shall only be changed manually. Electronic or mechanical sign copy change is prohibited. A Marquee Sign shall not obstruct sidewalks, required accessible paths of travel, or the visibility of other signs. Lighting fixtures shall be decorative and architecturally compatible with the building, and a marquee sign may incorporate flashing or blinking elements within the permitted Sign Area. Recommended Guidelines for appropriate design, materials, and color of fixtures and the appropriate flashing and blinking frequency within the Heritage Village Center District are set forth in the Heritage District Redevelopment Plan.

Glossary of Terms

Marquee. A permanent structure attached to, supported by, and projecting from a building for the purpose of protecting openings from the elements, providing shade or architectural embellishment. A *Marquee* does not include an *Awning* or *Canopy*.

Sign Types.

Changing Message Sign. A sign designed to permit change of copy manually, mechanically or electronically, including such signs where the change of copy is by remote or automatic means.

Marquee Sign. A sign painted, installed, attached or otherwise applied to or located directly on a *Marquee*.

Projecting Roof Sign. A sign mounted to and projecting from the wall of a building or structure whose depth is greater than its width; and exceeding the height of a roofline or parapet of the building or structure to which it is attached. *Projecting Roof Sign* does not include a *Marquee Sign*.

Projecting Sign. A sign mounted to and projecting from the wall of a building or structure whose depth is greater than its width. *Projecting Sign* does not include a *Marquee Sign* or *Projecting Roof Sign*.

Scrolling Sign. A sign that uses changing lights or colors to form one or more sign messages that move by electronic means horizontally or vertically across a display screen.
